



U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral & Social Sciences

FACT SHEET



RED CAPE: CRISIS ACTION PLANNING AND EXECUTION

Scott B. Shadrick

U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences

Crisis relief operations require that relevant local, state, and federal agencies effectively coordinate and collaborate. However, recent events such as Hurricane Katrina make clear that such tasks are not easy. The difficulty encountered by inter-agency collaboration is compounded when it spans military and civilian organizations. There are several factors which make inter-agency collaboration difficult. Perhaps the most debilitating—from a training perspective—is the lack of opportunity to train and practice these activities. Indeed, training events that bring military decision-makers into contact with federal, state, and local agencies are extremely rare.

The need for effective inter-agency training in crisis situations is real and pressing. The cost of poor performance in such situations is extremely high, costing untold lives and dollars. These crisis situations are obviously not confined to natural disasters: acts of terror are a major concern. Changing strategies in the Global War on Terror further raise the importance of such training. Military and crisis strategy experts are stressing that the approach to terrorism needs to change from inefficient, global policies to more effective and local ones. These experts caution that it is impossible to prevent every threat in every locale. However, it is possible to ensure that if a crisis event should occur, relief would be timely and effective.

The Army National Guard needs training designed to enhance the thinking and decision-making behaviors of leaders in crisis situations.

Recognizing the need, the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, its support contractor Aptima, Inc., the Indiana Army National Guard and its civil-military, interagency partners embarked on a collaborative research effort. The objective of the research was to improve performance in crisis action decision-making by identifying expert behaviors and providing focused and theme-based training. The goal was to develop decision-makers who are agile and adaptive in complex situations on the battlefield and in the homeland during civil crises.



Crisis action planning and execution requires a complex set of behaviors—the identification of these behaviors is a key component in the development of effective training products. To understand what is required for expert performance in such situations, the Flexible Method of Cognitive Task Analysis was applied to the domain of crisis relief operations, focusing upon those situations which the Army National Guard

deemed to be critical, likely to occur in the near future, or currently lacking training. Interviews with subject matter experts (SME) from relevant organizations and domains of expertise led to the developing a list of expert crisis management behaviors. These Crisis Management Themes consistently re-appeared throughout the SME interviews. They are:

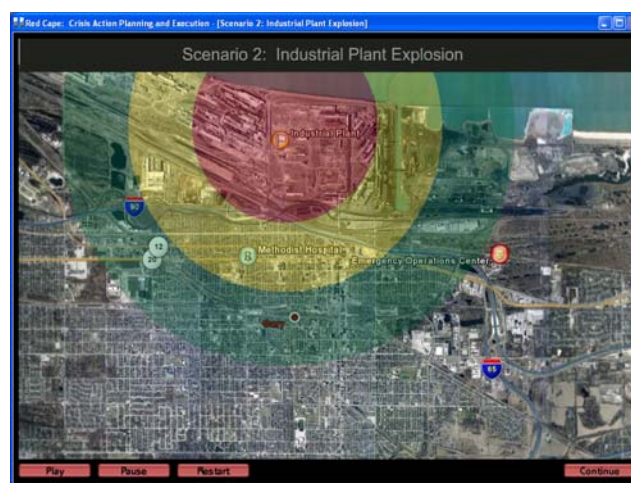
1. Maintain focus on mission priorities.
2. Keep the Chain of Command Flexible.
3. See the big picture.
4. Plan for and recognize decision points.
5. Reprioritize as necessary.
6. Use all available assets.
7. Think in shades of gray, not black and white.
8. Model a dynamic situation.
9. Understand the public need.

In addition to the expert behaviors, the interviews were used to construct 15 scenarios involving crisis situations, including a combination of homeland security and national disaster situations that require effective coordination among military and civilian agencies at the Federal, state, and local levels:

1. Power Grid Shutdown
2. Industrial Plant Explosion
3. Capital Punishment of a High Profile Prisoner
4. Dirty Bomb
5. Vehicle Accident with Hazardous Material
6. Severe Earthquake along New Madrid Fault
7. Sports Riot in a University Town
8. Storm of the Century
9. Prison Riot with Helicopter Crash
10. Nuclear Bomb in Shipping Container
11. Airplane Crash in Restricted Area
12. Animal Borne Disease in Stockyard
13. Industrial Plant Fire
14. Rail Yard Explosion
15. Arrive in Theater (Iraq)

The training materials consist of animated, multimedia scenarios which consist of FLASH[®], audio, and text. The target audience is composed of personnel from various organizations required to cooperate in actual

crisis situations. Designed for group settings, each scenario begins with a short presentation which bounds the problem. After reviewing the presentation, participants are given time to independently describe how they would approach the situation. Next, a facilitator leads the group in a detailed discussion to outline the various approaches suggested by the participants. Extra attention is paid to gaps and inconsistencies in knowledge, such as crisis situations where organizations have conflicting standing operating procedures and policies. Each scenario has expert solutions from the perspectives of the different organizations allowing for process-oriented feedback to the respective stakeholders.



A recent content validation study yielded quantitative evidence which strongly supports both the structure and content of the training. A scheduled series of upcoming workshops will provide further data which can be used to further refine the training product. Designed to provide the Army National Guard and other responding organizations with low-cost, effective training, the Red Cape program addresses a critical lack of training in an arena where poor performance bears high costs, both in property and lives.

For additional information, please contact Dr. Scott Shadrick at Scott.Shadrick@us.army.mil or at (502) 624-3450.